

VZCZCXRO4622
PP RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSA #1054/01 0831415

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 241415Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8873
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA PRIORITY 0952
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 2041
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 1041
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0501
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1144
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1036
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0062
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0375

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 001054

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/23/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SF](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: (C) MDC HAS "CONSTRUCTIVE" MEETING WITH SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

REF: A. TRENKLE-TABLER-STONE EMAIL OF 3/23/07
[1](#)B. DAR ES SALAAM 375
[1](#)C. PRETORIA 957
[1](#)D. HARARE 236

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Catherine Kay. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY. Zimbabwean opposition MDC leaders met March 23 with senior South African Government (SAG) officials in Pretoria. SAG officials sought the views of the MDC on the situation in Zimbabwe and asked them to describe the MDC "roadmap" for solving the crisis. Earlier that day, DepForMin Pahad publicly defended the South African strategy in Zimbabwe, claiming the SAG will not make "militant statements" just to please Western governments. He insisted on the importance of dialogue. Pahad also announced that the upcoming SADC Organ meeting on Zimbabwe, planned for March 25-27, would be postponed. The SAG meeting with the MDC tracks with the reported SADC strategy to deal with the Zimbabwe crisis (ref B), with Pretoria taking the lead with the opposition. If the goal of the SAG meeting was to reestablish Pretoria's credibility with the MDC, the South Africans appear to be succeeding. END SUMMARY.

MDC Upbeat on SAG Meeting

[12.](#) (C) Tendai Biti and Welshman Ncube, the Secretaries-General of the two Movement for Democratic Change

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(MDC) factions, met March 23 in Pretoria with senior SAG officials, including Mbeki's chief of staff Frank Chikane, DepForMin Aziz Pahad, Minister of Provincial and Local Government Sydney Mufamadi, Presidential Legal Advisor Mojanku Gumbi, and one unidentified Department of Foreign Affairs official. Biti represented MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai and Ncube represented the Arthur Mutambara

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splinter MDC faction. The meeting, which took place at the request of the SAG, lasted more than three hours.

¶3. (C) According to MDC Treasurer Roy Bennett, who spoke with Biti following the meeting, the South Africans said they wanted to hear how the MDC viewed the situation in Zimbabwe, and asked a series of probing questions about the economic and political crisis. Bennett told PolOff March 23 that Tendai Biti was very positive about the discussion and believed the meeting was "constructive."

¶4. (C) The SAG asked the MDC to describe how it would like to see the situation evolve. Bennett said that Biti sketched the key elements of the MDC "roadmap":

-- a transitional period with Mugabe out of power;
-- internationally-supervised elections in 2008;
-- installation of a new constitution; and
-- repeal of repressive legislation including POSA and AIPPA.
The South Africa representatives took note of the MDC roadmap, but did not put forward any of their own ideas for resolving the crisis, nor did they describe any of the details from President Kikwete's meeting with President Mugabe (ref B).

¶5. (C) According to Bennett, Legal Advisor Gumbi pushed the MDC to also show "goodwill" by scaling down protests. Ncube rejected Gumbi's request, arguing that South Africa had asked the MDC to show patience in the past, and it never helped their cause. Bennett commented that Biti was encouraged by Ncube's response, since Ncube had urged restraint in the past within the MDC. Biti also said that Chief of Staff Chikane commented on how South Africa was "battling" to deal with Mugabe, who was increasingly a "madman."

¶6. (C) Bennett said that the next step is for South Africa or other SADC leaders to meet with Mugabe. In the meantime, the MDC planned to continue, even intensify, its campaign of mass action.

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Zimbabwean Vice President Also in South Africa

¶7. (U) Zimbabwean Vice President Joyce Mujuru also visited South Africa March 23, although Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Ronnie Mamoepa said the visit was "private." Several South African and international newspapers reported that Mujuru met South African Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka at the Westcliffe Hotel in Johannesburg.

Pahad Concerned about "Meltdown"; Criticizes Media/West

¶8. (U) At his regular biweekly March 23 press conference, which was held before the MDC meeting, DepForMin Pahad warned of a "meltdown" in Zimbabwe ("it is difficult to see how a meltdown will not take place"), but also criticized the South African media for "sensationalism" and the "outside governments" for not playing a constructive role. Pahad said that South Africa will not "make militant statements to make us feel good, or to satisfy governments outside the African continent." Emphasizing the importance of dialogue between the Zimbabwean government and opposition, Pahad said that South Africa will try to "keep the dialogue open and to see how we can influence each other."

¶9. (U) According to press reports, Pahad also said that the March 25-27 meeting of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security on Zimbabwe would be postponed and could end up as a presidential summit.

Comment

¶10. (C) The South African outreach to the MDC tracks with ref

B, which outlined the Tanzanian/SADC plan for resolving the Zimbabwean crisis, giving Pretoria the lead in working with the Zimbabwean opposition. If the goal of the March 23 SAG meeting was to reestablish Pretoria's credibility with the MDC -- which had been badly damaged in recent years (ref D) -- Bennett's readout indicates the South Africans are succeeding.

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